USAID/CMM Speaker Series—Masculinity, Femininity, & Stabilization: The Case for Gender Analysis in Transitional Environments

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The U.S. Agency for International Development Gender and Conflict Speaker Series

Masculinity, Femininity, and Stabilization: The Case for Gender Analysis in Transitional Environments

Featuring

Dr. Cynthia Enloe

Clark University, Worcester, MA

Monday, July 11, 2011

Speakers & Discussants

Dr. Cynthia Enloe is a research professor in the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment and the Department of Women's Studies. Her current research focuses on the interactions of feminism, women, militarized culture, war, politics and globalized economics in countries such as Japan, Iraq, the US, Britain, the Philippines, Canada, Chile, and Turkey.

In years past, Enloe's research has focused on the interplay of women's politics in the national and international arenas, with special attention to how women's labor is made cheap in globalized factories (especially sneaker factories) and how women's emotional and physical labor has been used to support governments' war-waging policies – and how many women have tried to resist both of those efforts. Racial, class, ethnic, and national identities and pressures shaping ideas about femininities and masculinities have been common threads throughout her studies.

Enloe has written for *Ms. Magazine* and has appeared on National Public Radio and the BBC. In 2009, she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of London's School of Oriental and Asian Studies. Her twelve books include *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (2000), *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (2004), and *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (2007). Her newest book is *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (2010).

Nealin Parker, USAID Office of Transition Initiatives, is currently the Deputy Director of the Office of Transition Initiatives. Prior to her current position, she spent seven years working on development, conflict prevention, and post-conflict transitions in Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. She has worked with governments and non-governmental entities on post-conflict issues, including with Interpeace, the Bobst Center on Peace and Justice, Aceh's Peace and Reintegration Center, IFES, and The Carter Center.

Most recently, she served as the Chief of Staff for the Center on International Cooperation, an New York-based think-tank that focuses on policy research for the United Nations and other multilateral organizations. There her portfolio included programs in peacekeeping, state-building, rule of law, and democracy.

Neil Levine, USAID/CMM, is the Director of the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. CMM leads USAID efforts to develop approaches to the causes and consequences of violent conflict. From 2000-2007, Mr. Levine served as the Chief of Governance Division in USAID's Office of Democracy and Governance where he worked on issues involving promotion of transparent, accountable and effective democratic institutions. Mr. Levine served as deputy director for the Office of Central American Affairs (LAC/CEN) from 1995-2000. He has a strong interest in countries in transition and worked closely in support of USAID's Missions in Central America to support implementation of the peace accords in El Salvador and Guatemala.

INTRODUCTION

> ***"Remember what it was like to think you didn't have to ask the question. The only way to be humble is to remember how normal it seemed."*** *– Dr. Enloe on gender analysis*

Pursuant a decision made by USAID/CMM to delve further into the connection between gender and conflict, this fourth event of six in the Gender and Conflict Speaker Series brought Dr. Cynthia Enloe to share her remarks on the importance of gender analysis in transitional environments. Traditionally, the role of gender has been dismissed as irrelevant or burdensome, if it is thought of at all. Dr. Enloe shared from her current research on the intersections of women's studies, militarized culture, war and politics, and what that means for gender analysis. She posits that it is impossible to make sense of militaries, police, and even international development without examining masculinity and femininity.

Gender analysis is a tool that plays a critical role in programming. By way of an analogy, it is like asking a carpenter to add a leveler to his or her belt. The carpenter might respond, "Why do I need that if I already have a screwdriver and a hammer?" However, the leveler makes all the other tools more effective; a leveler helps a carpenter ensure that projects are balanced. Similarly, gender analysis enables practitioners and researchers to collect information for balanced analysis and programs.

THE ROLE OF GENDER AND GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis requires asking a set of cultural as well as mapping questions. To get people thinking about the roles of masculinity and femininity, it's important to ask the following:

1. Where are the women? In the organization, society, military, police, judicial system, etc.?
2. Where are the men?
3. Who benefits from each being where they are?
4. What do the women in those places think they're doing?
5. What do the men in those places think they're doing?

These questions uncover the politics of masculinity, femininity, fear, and opportunity.

Scholars in certain disciplines, such as Political Science, believe they are the most realistic and tough-minded; they perceive little need for "soft skills" like gender analysis. However, *not* employing gender analysis means not generating a reliable analysis. It means missing at least half of the picture. How could any program be built without it? Gender analysis lowers the risk of implementing programs that fail to reach their target population or that even do harm.

Foreign assistance in transitional environments often focuses on stabilization. This term carries a lot of weight; what exactly are we stabilizing? It is possible to stabilize a system where corruption is more deeply imbedded or waste is more deeply entrenched. In other words, it is possible to stabilize dysfunctional institutions. We can stabilize security forces that ignore sexual assault, justice systems that jail women for fleeing abusive spouses, and militaries that brutalize civilians. Our goal should be to reduce those processes that engender fear, alienation, fragmentation, and parochialism. Gender analysis can show us who the winners and losers are

in any changing environment. And we are in the business of effecting change. So we must find opportunities to strengthen the good institutions in order to stabilize a society.

As we seek to affect change, we must remember that change begins with us. Traditional Western culture is patriarchal, not matriarchal. Our cultural DNA has entrenched gender norms. When we encounter people and institutions that changed their attitude towards gender, it is critical ask how that happened. We should never assume a person's aptitude or potential based on who they are. Women are not inherently in favor of gender analysis any more than men are inherently against it. Our analysis should constantly probe at how changes occur so we can learn from them.

It's important to keep in mind that gender isn't about women; it is about how a culture defines men and women and how they relate to one another. Gender is about power. Women tend to be more informed about gender because their lives depend on it – they are the ones with less power because they are in fewer decision-making positions, they control fewer funds, and they are on the receiving end of more violence. They tend to be marginalized. People on the margins, as inherently vulnerable populations, are often the most insightful about how systems work. People in the center are often the least informed. They don't need to manipulate the system in order to benefit from it. They are the winners of the power dynamic.

For example, a domestic worker has to know the nuances of affluent culture. Though she comes from a humble background, she has to know the dynamics of the upper class better than her own because her income depends on it. The family employing her, on the other hand, may have some insight into their own relationships, but the domestic worker will be the most skilled at knowing each family member's needs and vulnerabilities – at least the ones with influence. The family probably knows nothing about the woman they've hired. The margins are the place to become smarter about power, masculinity, and femininity.

EXAMPLES OF GENDER ANALYSIS

Radio Usage in Afghanistan

There is power in radio when literacy is hard to come by. Radios are intended to reach places that do not have electricity and have higher than average rates of illiteracy.

A German NGO conducted an evaluation of a radio program on women's health it had sponsored in Afghanistan. It sent a team of experts to look at radio usage in remote areas. The team observed long periods of non-radio use, as well as when people listened to it. They found that the radio was available in a number of houses and served as a significant source of information for those who had access.

The team found that women did not turn the radio on. Certainly, it was not for lack of technical ability. Men denied women access because the radio was an opening to the wider world and gave the listener information. The men who controlled it did not think the women's health programs were important. Therefore, the program never reached its target audience.

The NGO had been careful enough in its program design to employ several local languages but had never considered who would be allowed to listen to it. When the researchers, who were self-critical, asked what they had *not* done prior to implementing the programs, they realized

they had not done a proper gender analysis. As a result, the program failed to accomplish its objectives.

World Water Forum

Global water policy, the privatization of water, and the fairness of water distribution are all debated at the World Water Forum. Water is power, but until recently there has been almost no discussion on water and gender. An informal group of gender analysts from eight countries wondered how the forum's policies were affecting women since women everywhere consume significant amounts of water in food preparation, cleaning, and child care.

The gender analysts assembled an assortment of gender and water specialists. They learned that lack of water negatively affects girls' education. In many societies, women are the water gatherers. As water sources move further and further away, the adult women in the house need more and more help carrying buckets. They call upon the young girls to help at home while boys are free to continue their education. As a result more girls drop out of school compared to boys. Additionally, research has documented that mothers are reluctant to let their menstruating-age daughters go to school if there is no water for washing nearby.

The gender analysts emphasized the importance of considering what the lack of water has to do with the relationship between girls and mothers, girls and boys, and girls and education in remote regions with limited access to water. They argued that if we don't take seriously the mal-distribution of water, especially in the places dealing with greater swings in climate due to climate change, we do not understand the real impact on girls, boys, women, and men.

Thanks to the efforts of this group, the World Water Forum expanded its definition of water expertise to include gender analysis. The forum recently held the first-ever plenary session on gender and water.

HIV/AIDS Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria, educating the military about HIV/AIDS was particularly challenging because of men's views of condom usage. Many Nigerian men believed that that having multiple wives and sex partners and *not* using a condom was masculine behavior. In a training program, U.S. military men were able to encourage male Nigerian soldiers that condom usage was model male behavior. By examining and being sensitive to gender roles, the program increased condom usage in Nigeria's military.

We cannot presume that these American trainers understood gender automatically before they taught others. If we do, we miss the opportunity to learn. We need to ask how they got there in the first place and what that says about how we approach gender education, as well as how it informs future programs and awareness campaigns.

HIV/AIDS prevention workers tend to know more than anyone about masculinity and how it impacts culture. Their work entails understanding gender roles first so that they can change sexual behavior which is profoundly shaped by gender norms. They have found the process of educating men on using condoms, as well as teaching women to encourage men to use condoms, to be a sensitive issue that takes a great deal of time and care before real change can occur.

Masculinized Language

For most people, one of the cruelest experiences is to be deprived of being taken seriously. Consequently, women in traditionally male-dominated fields often wield masculinized language in order to earn respect from their male colleagues. Recently, an Indian professor was teaching an Introduction to National Security Politics course for an all-male class at a prestigious university. When she walked in the classroom the first day wearing a sari, the students communicated through side comments and body language that she had nothing to teach them about security. In the hopes of being taken seriously, she spent the first five sessions teaching weaponry, military tactics, and anything else that qualified as "masculine" in its narrowest definition. Her strategy was successful—her students came to respect her expertise—but it came at a cost. She compromised her curriculum in order to be taken seriously by male students, since hyper-masculinized subjects like armaments are not the most relevant elements of national security.

This story raises questions for development practitioners working in conflict-prone environments. How do we get taken seriously when our partners are institutions like the military that are not accustomed to thinking about gender? How do we masculinize our discourse in order to be heard? What compromises do we make and how does that affect our policy advocacy? What issues do we give up on first?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

> *"We need to think of masculinity and femininity as dancers, not boxers."*
> *–Dr. Enloe*

Gender analysis is fundamental to designing effective programs—and no less so in conflict-prone environments. Taking gender into account helps us understand who we are trying to help, how they will access our programs, and what harm or benefits may result. For those who are not accustomed to being curious about gender, these questions can seem like a burden. After all, understanding gender and promoting gender equality are not necessarily in the mandate of all USAID offices. But those intending to stabilize fragile environments seek out symbolic and catalytic issues that can move a country toward peace.

Gender analysis is an analytic tool. In one sense, it's great to add to our staff's tool belts. But there is also the sense that a level is being forced on staff when they just want to hammer a nail. Goal versus mandate can come into conflict and there can be pushback, even from self-described feminists. It isn't always obvious where gender analysis provides the most insight and unless donors see the benefits they won't employ it.

What do we learn when we're curious about gender? We discover that gender is a smaller piece of a much larger power dynamic. We uncover who and what has the capacity to stabilize a society and what tools they use to do so. We learn how our resources fit into these structures. And we learn new ways to fortify these fragile societies based on positive, healthy systems.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

There are challenges in reaching the margins of society, as well as logistical problems and risks. For example, you have problems accessing local women staff, or it may be

difficult for those women to access the marginalized people. How do you get those voices when it's dangerous or impractical?
It has to begin at USAID. Until it's truly institutionalized at here, until we hold others to it, we cannot make a long-term impact. Because it's gender, it's considered a box to check; it's an "add-on" to other projects/programs. We tend to assume that gender means women's issues, and they fit it in a nice neat box. However, a female CEO may not be gender aware just because she's a woman. Checking a box is not enough. We need more candid discussions amongst ourselves.

In regard to accessing marginal populations, it should be noted that in a lot of cases, they may self-select out. Sometimes you have to meet with a man to get to the women. However, are we taking the time to find a way to get at this and finding the way they would be willing to articulate their thoughts and opinions? In West Africa, for example, a lot of women did not think they even had a role or place to voice an opinion. We have to help redefine our notion of voice.

During a recent experience in a sub-region working with women and girls, we had to set quotas for young men in the programs. Without the quotas, girls were not able to take advantage of opportunities. Any practical advice on how to talk to people about gender being inclusive, especially with people who believe gender equals women?
"Gender equals women" is relatively new. It was a strategic device. People who had worked for years in the UN were strategically using "gender," because it sounded safer, less threatening, and more remote than "women." It was something easier to sell in UNDP, UNESCO, the Security Council, etc. Over time, people simply used "gender" but did not change their mindset on what it means. What it means to be a man, a woman, and the relationship between them—that is the broader meaning of gender.

While a lot of progress has been made in using gendered language, something has to be reintroduced. This is not to say masculinity is not something that is unimportant, but it does effects men's willingness to consider alternatives. Additionally, women have deep notions about masculinity while raising sons and daughters. Researcher Leslie Gill did a study in La Paz, Bolivia with local women, and she found that mothers were reluctant to have their daughters consider marrying a man if he had not gone through military training. The implication was that only a man who survived that would be tough enough to marry her daughter.

The idea that femininity is only held by women and masculinity is only held by men is incorrect—it is much more complex than that. Unfortunately, once gender is reduced to a box to check, it is only a burden to be ritualized. If one thinks of gender of a strategic tool, we will be more realistic and programs will be more sustainable.

Are masculinity and femininity necessarily oppositional?
No. We need to think of masculinity and femininity as dancers, not boxers.